

PCR VS. RAPID HOME ANTIGEN TESTS



A GUIDE

When COVID-19 cases are surging, any test is better than none. If you have options, follow the recommendations in these examples.



Going to an indoor or crowded event?

A rapid home test on the same day (before the event) is best.



Are you a close contact to someone with COVID-19 but don't have symptoms?

PCR is preferred, but rapid home test is fine. Wait 5 days after exposure before testing.



Going to be traveling by plane?

Timing and test type depends on the airline's requirements, but PCR tests no more than 3 days before travel are usually preferred.



Went to a crowded/indoor event or other high risk situation?

Take a rapid home test or PCR test 5 days after the event.



Have COVID-19 symptoms and you are a close contact?

A PCR test is best, but rapid home test is fine, take either as soon as symptoms start.



Have COVID-19 symptoms but you are not a close contact?

A PCR test is best, but rapid home test is fine, take either as soon as symptoms start.

Understanding Test Results:

- **A positive rapid home or PCR test** result means you have the virus. Follow Alexandria Health Department (ADH) guidance on what to do if you are sick and stay away from others. Go to alexandriava.gov/COVIDNextSteps to find out exactly what to do after you test positive.
- **A negative rapid home test** result means that the test did not detect the virus and you may not have an infection, but it does not completely rule it out. You should take another test at least 24 hours later to completely rule out a COVID-19 infection.
- **If you have a negative rapid home test followed by a positive test of either type, your first test may have been incorrect** or taken too soon after exposure, and you should assume you are positive.

POSITIVE RAPID HOME TEST? WE CAN HELP!

Fill out a short form so the Alexandria Health Department can provide you with more information and resources to stay home safely: redcap.link/aiv7nppx



ALEXANDRIAVA.GOV/CORONAVIRUS

